

REMARKS FOR DEPUTY SECRETARY BURNS
PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY MINISTERIAL OPENING

Good morning. It is a pleasure to join you for this fifth Ministerial meeting of Pathways to Prosperity. On behalf of Secretary Clinton, I can tell you that the United States is enormously pleased with the progress that has been made through Pathways. At the same time, we all recognize that we all have more work to do to ensure that this important partnership reaches its full potential. I would like to thank Minister Díaz-Granados (DEE-as gra-NAH-dos) and the Santos (SAHN-tos) administration for their gracious hospitality.

Pathways for Prosperity represents an important model demonstrating how deeper cooperation among hemispheric partners can drive regional and global prosperity. Through Pathways, we have worked collectively to build new architectures of cooperation that advance more open and inclusive societies, where the benefits of trade and investment are broadly felt, and where even struggling communities can produce successful entrepreneurs.

Our shared record of democratic development and social advancement has global resonance at a time when democratic models and successful social policies are needed more than ever. While we all know that trade is vital to our regional prosperity, we also know that trade alone is not enough. We must turn the Americas, already a community of shared history, geography, culture, and values, into something greater – a shared platform for global success. Our work through Pathways to Prosperity will be critical to this effort, and I hope that we can use this ministerial meeting to make further progress in translating our strategic vision into concrete steps.

When we think about connecting the Americas, we start with our shared agenda for competitiveness and innovation – but this success will be incomplete unless we focus on tools to advance social inclusion. Today's discussion will play an important role in advancing the objectives at the heart of Pathways: sharing ideas and best practices to promote economic growth, opportunity, and financial and social inclusion in our hemisphere. As our Colombian hosts have shown in word and deed those steps must be all about building connections among governments, businesses, educational institutions, civil societies, and ordinary citizens.

On this note, I congratulate Colombia for linking the Pathways Ministerial with the Americas Competitiveness Forum. This continues an important innovation made by the Dominican Republic last year, and will be carried forward by Panama in 2013. The goals of ACF and Pathways are distinct but complementary: ACF

provides a forum for political, economic, and business leaders to exchange ideas about how to thrive in an increasingly competitive global economy, while Pathways seeks to ensure that all of our people reap the benefits of economic growth.

Secretary Clinton said that the surest path to more prosperous societies requires good governance and broad-based, inclusive economic growth. These vital elements foster sustainable development. By working together in Pathways, we can identify and multiply innovative business practices and social policies. Local successes that affect several hundred can be leveraged into sustainable change for millions throughout the region.

Let me highlight two particular areas of focus for the United States. The first is our emphasis on providing training and financing to small-scale entrepreneurs to better equip them to grow their businesses and compete in the global marketplace. The building block of this effort is the small business development center (SBDC), modeled on a successful practice in the United States that we are working to expand through Pathways, in partnership with Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, and others. To achieve the goal of expanding this model throughout the region, President Obama launched the Small Business Network of the Americas (SBNA) at the Summit of the Americas in April, linking more than 2,000 SBDCs throughout the Western Hemisphere -- with enthusiastic support from Pathways countries.

A second area of focus is supporting women entrepreneurs, an ambition that has become a signature accomplishment of Pathways. Experience demonstrates that investing in women-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is one of the best ways to simultaneously achieve economic, financial, and social impacts. The Women's Entrepreneurship in the Americas (WEAmericas) initiative, launched by Secretary Clinton and her counterparts at the Summit earlier this year, uses public-private partnerships to increase women's economic participation and improve women's access to markets, finance, and training and networks. This effort seeks to build on the progress Pathways has made by implementing the Pathways Access Initiative (PAI), providing training to women entrepreneurs through WeConnect International, and connecting U.S. businesses with women-owned businesses in Peru. Today, the Colombian women entrepreneurs of the Colempresarias (co-lem-press-AH-ree-ahs) network will have the opportunity to break further barriers, by displaying their products and connecting with private sector partners to increase their exports.

The fundamental message I want to leave you with is one of optimism about what the United States and the countries of the Americas can accomplish when we

focus on common goals and shared values. We can work together to deepen and consolidate support in our hemisphere for open, free, transparent, and fair economic competition, as with strengthen our regional commitment to democracy and social inclusion. Not only will this benefit our citizens, but it will also strengthen our collective position as we promote our common values around the world.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on these issues and to adopting a Declaration and a Plan of Action that will guide us to our goals over the course of the next year. I am excited about the new Pathways Clearinghouse that will be introduced today, which will expand our network of stakeholders and further engage the private sector. I am confident that with our work here today, and in the days to come, we will make progress toward achieving our common objectives in this region, deliver on the promise of partnership, and, most importantly, make a better life for all our citizens.

Thank you.